

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009*

**Statement on the Canonization of Father Damien De Veuster**

*October 9, 2009*

I wish to express my deep admiration for the life of Blessed Damien De Veuster, who will be canonized on Sunday by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. I also want to convey my best wishes to the Kingdom of Belgium and its people, who are proud to count Fr. Damien among their great citizens.

Fr. Damien has also earned a special place in the hearts of Hawaiians. I recall many stories from my youth about his tireless work there to care for those suffering from leprosy who had been cast out. Following in the steps of Jesus' ministry to the lepers, Fr. Damien challenged the stigmatizing effects of disease, giving voice to the voiceless and, ultimately, sacrificing his own life to bring dignity to so many.

In our own time as millions around the world suffer from disease, especially the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, we should draw on the example of Fr. Damien's resolve in answering the urgent call to heal and care for the sick.

I offer my prayers as people of all faiths join the Holy Father and millions of Catholics around the world in celebrating Fr. Damien's extraordinary life and witness.

*Categories:* Statements by the President : Father Damien De Veuster, canonization.

*Names:* Pope Benedict XVI.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD200900795.